

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

1. (Previously Presented) A method of converting (i) solid fossil fuels, or (ii) oil tars obtained by distillation of coal, turf, grass, rubber, sapropel, sapropelites, slates, or wood, into biosynthetic petroleum, comprising the steps of:

- a) isolating a starting microorganism capable of said conversion;
- b) isolating from the starting microorganism the genes responsible for the conversion ability;
- c) transfecting the genes into a host microorganism, and
- d) combining the host microorganism with the solid fossil fuels or oil tars under conditions suitable for the conversion of the solid fossil fuels or oil tars into biosynthetic petroleum.

2. (Canceled)

3. (Previously presented) The method of claim 1 wherein the starting microorganism is Thiobacillus aquaesulis 4255 or 389, Thiosphaera pantotropha 356, Thiosphaera pantotropha 2944, Thioibacillus thoioparus 55, or mutants or variants thereof, or a microorganism which exists naturally in water.

4. (Canceled)

5. (Canceled)

6. (Canceled)

7. (Canceled)

8. (Canceled)

9. (Previously Presented) A method of improving conversion of (i) solid fossil fuels, or (ii) oil tars obtained by distillation of coal, turf, grass, rubber, sapropel, sapropelites, slates, or wood, into biosynthetic petroleum, comprising the steps of:

- (a) isolating a starting microorganism capable of said conversion;
- (b) isolating from the starting microorganism an oligonucleotide probe complementary to a gene responsible for the conversion ability;
- (c) placing the probe under hybridizing conditions in contact with amplicons from other microorganisms suspected to be capable of or being capable of said conversion;
- (d) isolating amplicons which hybridized;
- (e) transfecting the isolated amplicons into a host microorganism;
- (f) combining the host microorganism with the solid fossil fuels or oil tars under conditions suitable for the conversion of the solid fossil fuels or oil tars into biosynthetic petroleum; and
- (g) determining whether productivity improved.

10. (Canceled)

11. (Previously Presented) A method of converting carbon, hydrogen and oxygen into biosynthetic coal or biosynthetic petroleum, comprising the steps of:

- (a) isolating a starting microorganism capable of said conversion;
- (b) isolating from the starting microorganism the genes responsible for the conversion ability;
- (c) transfecting the genes into a host microorganism; and

(d) combining the host microorganism with the carbon, hydrogen and oxygen under conditions suitable for the conversion of the carbon, hydrogen and oxygen into biosynthetic coal or biosynthetic petroleum.

12. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 11 wherein, after transfection, the transfected host microorganism as compared to the starting microorganism is capable of faster growth, reproduction, enhanced survivability in a production environment, or more production of biosynthetic coal or biosynthetic petroleum per unit of a nutrient.

13. (Previously presented) The method of claim 11 wherein the host microorganism can exist in salt water or fresh water, can metabolize glucose, rubber, grass, or other nutrient media, can survive acidic or basic environments, can oxidize sulfur, or can exist in aerobic or anaerobic conditions.

14. (Previously presented) The method of claim 11 wherein the genes responsible for conversion are isolated by subtractive hybridization.

15. (Original) The method of claim 14 wherein the subtractive hybridization is performed by representational difference analysis.

16. (Canceled)

17. (Previously Presented) A method of converting (i) solid fossil fuels, or

(ii) oil tars obtained by distillation of coal, turf, grass, rubber, sapropel, sapropelites, slates, or wood,

into biosynthetic petroleum, comprising the steps of:

a) obtaining a gene encoding a protein capable of said conversion;

b) transfecting the gene into a host microorganism, and

c) combining the host microorganism with the solid fossil fuels or oil tars under conditions suitable for the conversion of the solid fossil fuels or oil tars into biosynthetic petroleum.

18. (Currently Amended) A method of converting carbon, hydrogen and oxygen into biosynthetic coal or biosynthetic petroleum, comprising the steps of:

- a) obtaining a gene encoding a protein capable of said conversion;
- b) transfecting the gene into a host microorganism; and
- c) combining the host microorganism with the carbon, hydrogen and oxygen under conditions suitable for the conversion of the carbon, hydrogen and oxygen into biosynthetic coal or biosynthetic petroleum.